

## A6 Order

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### SPANISH FICTION ORDER – Frank R. Walkup Library John Muir High School

**Purpose:** To use selection criteria, knowledge of a library media center collection, knowledge of a school's curriculum, and awareness of teachers' and students' needs to develop one section of a school library media center collection.

There are several compelling reasons for choosing the Spanish Fiction section from the JMHS Collection Map for immediate development. The reasons fall in categories of academic achievement, district goal initiatives and global citizenship. Muir's student body is currently over 60% Hispanic. Many of the students here are Spanish native speakers but few are fluent readers and writers in the language.

The World Language curriculum offered at Muir is Spanish only. Students are encouraged to take level one, two and three Spanish classes. There are Spanish 2 classes available specifically for native speakers and an Advanced Placement class offered for those students whose goals include college. The Spanish Department has set goals to provide students with reading opportunities to meet the January 2009 *World Language Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve*. They are addressing the issue that as California teachers "we must provide students with opportunities to learn languages and cultures by participating in communicative interactions that prepare for real-world language use and global citizenship. Language learning needs to be a lifelong endeavor."<sup>1</sup> "As they progress along the Language Learning Continuum, students engage in communication that is age- and stage-appropriate." The collection development process for the Spanish Fiction section is focusing on the following Communication Standards.

#### Stage I

- 1.2 Interpret written, spoken or signed (ASL) language.

##### *Functions*

- 1.5 Identify learned words, signs (ASL), and phrases in authentic texts.

#### Stage II

- 1.2 Interpret written, spoken or signed (ASL) language.

##### *Functions*

- 2.5 Demonstrate understanding of the general meaning, key ideas, and some details in authentic texts.

#### Stage III

- 1.2 Interpret written, spoken or signed (ASL) language.

##### *Functions*

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<sup>1</sup> *World language content standards for California public schools: kindergarten through grade twelve..* Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education, 2010.

3.5 Demonstrate understanding of the main idea and key details in authentic texts.

#### **Stage IV**

1.2 Interpret written, spoken or signed (ASL) language.

#### *Functions*

4.5 Demonstrate understanding of the main ideas and most details in authentic texts.

In conjunction with the Pasadena Unified School District's Graduate Profile in the Strategic Plan and The Seal of Biliteracy Program, the administration at Muir is dedicated to promoting and recognizing their students' language proficiency skills. They want to encourage every student to develop global competency for the twenty-first century and beyond. Last year, although our population is over 60% Hispanic of which over 25% are native Spanish speakers, only a few students took advantage of the bilingual seal program. The administration and the Spanish Department are committed to seeing more students participate and succeed.

Muir can be considered representative of a much larger world picture. In a brief review of one of the titles selected for the total list, a reviewer was commenting on Amazon's choice to highlight bilingual books by an up-and-coming bilingual picture book author, Karl Beckstrand. The reviewer noted that "Considering that native Spanish speakers are more common than native English speakers worldwide (the only other native language more common than Spanish is Mandarin, according to Time and Wikipedia), Amazon's lead should be followed. Beckstrand's picture books may be a good start."<sup>2</sup>

These are several very good reasons to begin this year's collection development activities on the Spanish Fiction section of the collection. To be successful globally, our students will benefit from the academic and local language goals set for them by the State of California, PUSD and John Muir High School.

To meet the stated needs for the Spanish Language section of the collection, there were several criteria to be considered. It was decided that the selection of titles would focus on the following:

- Titles purchased would represent all reading levels.
- Priority would be given to books whose subjects and themes appeal to reluctant readers and boys.
- The titles purchased would be in Spanish only and preferably not bilingual titles.
- A balance of books originally published in Spanish and books translated to Spanish is desirable.
- One teacher requested that translations of popular books in English that are already part of the library's collection should also be considered a higher priority purchase.

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<sup>2</sup> "U.S. Spanish Children's Book Sales Climb." *Press Release Distribution, Public Relations Services* / SBWire. straight Line PR, 23 Nov. 2011. Web. 27 Nov. 2011. <http://www.sbwire.com/press-releases/sbwire-115815.htm>

The budget of \$350.00 would allow us to purchase about twenty-four titles. Using the guidelines suggested by the vendor, we have selected approximately 10% more than the \$350.00 budget limitation because publishers frequently change the availability of titles and they may not be able to ship 100% of the requested list. We set a “not to exceed” amount of \$350.00 and marked those titles we prefer as “First Choice.” Of the remaining titles, the vendor has permission to cancel a title or titles to remain within the allocated amount. This also allows us to include processing and MARC records.

I have chosen ten representative titles as examples of what will be purchased and included professional reviews for each of them. Finding the reviews was, in some ways, a challenge. Many of the reviews were available from Follett via their Titlewave collection development feature. Some were collected from online versions of professional review publications. There was an issue with Spanish language reviews provided by Criticas because it ceased publication in 2009. Criticas reviews were made available temporarily from *Library Journal* and *School Library Journal* until January 2010 but, at the present time, they are no longer accessible online. Reviews in either Spanish or English were acceptable. Those that were in Spanish have been translated using Google’s Translate tool. For this reason, some of the reviews are not as coherent as the original Spanish version, but because some members of the selection team do not read Spanish, it was necessary to force the translations.

### **A Representative Sample of Titles Selected for Purchase**

For a complete list of potential purchases, [click here](#).

1. Alarcón, Daniel, and Sheila Alvarado. *Ciudad de payasos*. 1. ed. Lima, Peru: Alfaguara, 2010. Print.

**Ciudad de payasos. (City of Clowns)** Alarcón, Daniel, text. Alvarado, Sheila, illus. tr. by Jorge Cornejo Calle. Peru/U.S.: Alfaguara: Santillana. 2010. 143p. illus. ISBN 9786124039539. pap. \$19.99. GRAPHIC NOVEL

Alarcón's short story first published in *The New Yorker* in June 2003 and subsequently reprinted in his 2005 story collection, *War by Candlelight* gets a visual upgrade here. He and good friend and graphic partner Alvarado bring to our attention the story's important backdrop: the city of Lima, whose culture of crime and corruption feeds the hopelessness and loneliness that permeates the lives of its inhabitants, including Chino, the journalist at the center of the story. Using a black-and-white palette to complement Alarcón's prose, Alvarado casts a pall over the city and the marginalized characters, including prostitutes and clowns. Whereas the original source material was written at a vertiginous pace, after the author's year-long stint teaching photography to the children of the slums of San Juan de Lurigancho, this adaptation, Alarcón admits, was assembled more piecemeal, with every sketch drawn and redrawn to perfection over the course of a year. In an afterword, Alarcón offers more insight into the story behind the story; he explains, for example that during his last week in Lima he met a writer from the newspaper *La República* who became his inspiration for Chino and that clowns are an indelible part of life in Lima. Recommended for Latin American fiction collections. [See also Alarcón's *The King Is Always Above His People*, reviewed below.-Ed.]-Michael Sosa, Brooklyn, NY

"April Reviews of the Latest Spanish-Language Books for Adults, Fiction, Nonfiction, and Also in Translation." *Library Journal: Library News, Reviews and Views*. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Nov. 2011. <[http://www.libraryjournal.com/lj/reviews/spanish/890337-474/april\\_reviews\\_of\\_the\\_latest.html.csp](http://www.libraryjournal.com/lj/reviews/spanish/890337-474/april_reviews_of_the_latest.html.csp)>.

2. Allende, Isabel. *La ciudad de las bestias*. 1. ed. New York, N.Y.: Rayo, 2003. Print.

**La ciudad de las bestias** (#39616W7) by Allende, Isabel Criticas (September/October 2002)  
YA-This best-selling Chilean author is known for her poetic, subtly feminist, and politically charged novels such as *La casa de los espíritus* (The House of the Spirits, Rayo, 2001) and most recently *Retrato en sepia* (Portrait in Sepia, Rayo, 2001). Allende's celebrated mixture of magic realism, lush description, and psychological insight grace the pages of this, her first young adult novel. Alexander Cold, an introspective 15-year-old, is ripped from his comfortable California existence and launched into the heart of darkness. On a journalistic assignment for International Geographic, the teen, his grandmother Kate, and crew embark on a deadly mission into the Amazon jungle to find the mythical beast, the South American equivalent of the Abominable Snowman. In this coming-of-age story, Alexander and his new friend, Nadia, discover their hidden powers as they strive to save the indigenous people or "la gente de la neblina" ("the people of the mist"). This tale anchors itself in the need to protect the resplendent secrets of the Amazon and its people, beasts, and resources. Suspenseful chapters like "Raptados" ("Kidnapped") and beautifully crafted descriptions do not, however, nullify this novel's repetitive nature and sometimes predictable plot. While the language is easily understood, the novel's length may be daunting to most young adult readers. Recommended for libraries and bookstores with large Spanish-language teen sections. Salwa Jabado, Astoria, NY  
Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information.

3. Alvarez, Julia, and Liliana Valenzuela. *Antes de ser libres*. 1a. ed. Nueva York: Dell Laurel-Leaf, 2004. Print.

**Antes de ser libres (#38622V1)**

**by Alvarez, Julia**

**Criticas (May 1, 2004)**

Gr 6-YA- Twelve-year-old Anita de la Torre had never felt constrained in her native Dominican Republic. Living in a busy family compound, attending an American school, and striving to please El Jefe, the country's ruler, all seemed part of normal existence. But by November 1960, repression became palpable. Her grandparents and other family members immigrate to the United States, her young uncle disappears, and there is talk of an international embargo against her country. As her family becomes more involved in a plan to overthrow El Jefe, Anita must mature at undue speed. In an excellently crafted work of historical fiction, 2004 Pura Belpré Award winner Alvarez reworks her family's experiences during the time of Trujillo's assassination into a tale that is as true in its voice as it is compellingly realistic in its portrayal of brutal repression, loss, and courage. Valenzuela's translation is true to the English original, maintaining or enhancing some of its most important elements. Fluid and descriptive, Alvarez's novel speaks eloquently to the resilience of the human spirit and the true cost of freedom. Highly recommended for all libraries and bookstores alike.-Ann Welton, Grant Center for the

Expressive Arts, Tacoma, WA Copyright 2004 Reed Business Information.

### **Horn Book starred (Fall 2004)**

In this translated edition of *Before We Were Free* (*Horn Book* rev. 9/02), the first-person present-tense narration flows as naturally as if Spanish had been the original language. This edition of Alvarez's Pura Belpré award winner is an essential title for bilingual collections and for libraries serving Spanish-speaking communities.

4. Angulo, Teresa. *Cartas a mi mamá*. Berkeley, Calif.: Libros Tigrillo, 2006. Print.

**Cartas a mi mamá** (#14257S5) by Cardenas Angulo, Teresa, 1970-  
Criticas (January 1, 2007)

Gr 7+-Originally published in Cuba, this poignant story of racism and hope holds valuable lessons for all readers. A young orphan comes of age within the bosom of the poor blood kin who take her in. In a series of letters written to her beloved dead mother, the narrator/protagonist unburdens her heart and speaks of the loneliness of her existence. In the beginning, she is a powerless black girl belittled and taunted for her blackness. She senses that it's wrong to feel shame for her skin color and racial features. When she starts questioning her community's popular belief that blacks should whiten their race, the roots of a healthy identity begin to sprout. As witness to the struggles of single mothers and abused women, the girl learns compassion not just for her race but also for her gender. An essential read for young and old. Ideal for all libraries with Hispanic patrons.-Gisela Norat, Agnes Scott Coll., Decatur, GA  
Copyright 2007 Reed Business Information.

### **Library Media Connection (October 2006)**

This short, but poignant novel conveys the narrator's loneliness and sorrow in the letters she writes to her dead mother. She feels the pain of racial prejudice against her black skin and African features. When one of her cousins falls ill, her grandmother believes she has brought them bad luck and uses a "curse-remover" branch to swat her so hard that bruises are left. Although an award-winner in Cuba, this novel may have a limited readership in the United States. The translation is somewhat choppy and the book is so short that the reader is just beginning to get interested when it ends. A more interesting read concerning Cuban culture might be Nancy Osa's, *Cuba 15* (Delacorte Press (Random House), 2003). Additional Selection. Kathryn Childs, Library Media Specialist, Morris (Oklahoma) Middle/High School Library  
[Editor's Note: Also available in Spanish, *Cartas a Mi Mam* (0-88899-722-1).]

5. Cohn, Diana, Francisco Delgado, Luis J. Rodriguez, and Sharon Franco. *Yes, we can! : janitor strike in L.A. ¡Si, se puede!*. El Paso, Tex.: Cinco Puntos Press, 2002. Print.

### **Si, se puede! = Yes, we can! : janitor strike in L.A.** (#23832N7)

by Cohn, Dian

Criticas (January 1, 2005)

Gr 3-5-Carlitos lives with his mother and his grandmother in Los Angeles. While he sleeps, his mother cleans office buildings downtown. She comes home in time to have breakfast with him, then he goes off to school as she goes to bed. Carlitos is proud of his mother and her dedication,

and he is as sorry as she is that she must work on the weekends at other jobs to make ends meet. Carlitos worries when she explains to him that she and a number of other janitors have decided to go on strike for a raise that will allow her to work one job and get his grandmother the medical care she needs. But as the days go by, he is impressed with all the people who turn out in support of the janitors. He wants to contribute something, too, and finally, he does. The gentle story of one child's contribution to a strike, as well as the successful outcome, is a perfect vehicle for explaining the idea of a fair and reasonable wage and a union's power to make social change. Ending with an essay on one of the women behind the 2000 Los Angeles janitor strike, this clear and engaging story works equally well in the stylish Spanish translation as it does in English. Delgado's bright, primitive illustrations, reminiscent of small-scale Diego Rivera, are an excellent extension of the moving narrative. Recommended for both libraries and bookstores.- Ann Welton, Grant Elementary, Tacoma, WA Copyright 2005 Reed Business Information.

6. Jiménez, Francisco. *Cajas de cartón: relatos de la vida peregrina de un niño campesino*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000. Print.

**Cajas de carton : relatos de la vida peregrina de un niño campesino (#16262N3)**

by Jiménez, Francisco, 194

Criticas (January/February 2003)

Gr 5-8-These two books together offer first-hand accounts of life as a migrant worker in the United States in the 1950s. Jiménez uses his own biographical details and family stories to paint an intimate and, at times, nostalgic picture of his family's struggles to survive as undocumented workers in California. Although his tone is often sentimental, the author does not attempt to gloss over the daily struggles with hunger, poverty, homelessness, and hard work. The family survives from season to season by following the crops up and down the California coast, living in tent cities and shacks, avoiding la migra ("immigration authorities") and, throughout it all, finding a way to send the children to school. Jiménez presents his story in the first person as seen through a child's eyes, which lends an undeniable authenticity to the anecdotes. Originally published in English in 1997, sections of *Cajas de carton* have also appeared in periodical publications. The second book, first published in English in 2001, picks up the narrative as Panchito is getting ready for high school but first has to deal with the deportation of his entire family. From these dire beginnings, the story goes on to chronicle the success of the author as he timidly ventures beyond his social sphere, becomes the senior class president, and eventually earns a college scholarship. Both texts have been ably translated by the author. Named a Pura Belpré honor book, both *Senderos fronterizos* and its prequel belong in every library serving Mexican American populations. The straightforward narrative lends itself to classroom use as well as to independent reading, and it will appeal to adult readers as well as middle-schoolers.- Maria Otero-Boisvert, "Criticas" Copyright 2003 Cahners Business Information.

Horn Book (Spring, 2003)

Jiménez translates his two award-winning memoirs, *The Circuit* and *Breaking Through*, into Spanish. These carefully and lovingly translated editions offer Spanish-speaking children the opportunity to enjoy these powerful stories. [Review covers these titles: *Cajas de cartón* and *Senderos fronterizos*.]

7. Selznick, Brian, and Xohana Bastida. *La invención de Hugo Cabret: una novela narrada con palabras e ilustraciones*. Boadilla del Monte [Spain: Ediciones SM, 2007. Print.

**La invencion de Hugo Cabret : una novela narrada con palabras e ilustraciones (#17260V9)**

by Selznick, Brian

Criticas (March 1, 2008)

Gr 4-7-Here is a true masterpiece-an artful blending of narrative, illustration, and cinematic technique, for a story as tantalizing as it is touching. Twelve-year-old orphan Hugo lives in the walls of a Paris train station at the turn of the 20th century, where he tends to the clocks and filches what he needs to survive. Hugo's recently deceased father, a clockmaker, worked in a museum where he discovered an automaton: a humanlike figure seated at a desk, pen in hand, as if ready to deliver a message. After his father showed Hugo the robot, the boy became just as obsessed with getting the automaton to function as his father had been, and the man gave his son one of the notebooks he used to record the automaton's inner workings. The plot grows as intricate as the robot's gears and mechanisms [...] To Selznick's credit, the coincidences all feel carefully orchestrated; epiphany after epiphany occurs before the book comes to its sumptuous, glorious end. [...] The plot ultimately has much to do with the history of the movies, and Selznick's genius lies in his expert use of such a visual style to spotlight the role of this highly visual media. A standout achievement. Copyright 2008 Reed Business Information.

8. Stein, Garth, and Agustín Estrada. *El arte de conducir bajo la lluvia: novela*. 1. ed. Doral, FL: Suma De Letras, 2009. Print.

**El arte de conducir bajo la lluvia : novela (#02621Q5)**

by Stein, Garth

Library Journal (June 15, 2009)

Enzo narrates his life story, beginning with his impending death. He's not afraid of dying, as he's seen a television documentary on the Mongolian belief that a good dog will be reincarnated as a man. Yes, Enzo is a dog. And he belongs to Denny: husband, father, and customer service technician. Denny's dream is to be a professional race-car driver, and Enzo recounts the triumphs and tragedies-medical, financial, and legal-they share in this quest, the dangers of the racetrack being the least of their obstacles. Enzo ultimately teaches Denny and the reader that persistence and joie de vivre will see them through to the checkered flag. Recommended for public libraries with large Spanish-language commercial fiction collections. [LJ 4/1/08] Copyright 2009 Reed Business Information.

9. Zafón, Carlos. *El príncipe de la niebla*. 1. ed. Barcelona: Planeta, 2006. Print.

**El principe de la niebla (#02214T3)**

by Ruiz Zafon, Carlos, 1964-

Criticas (December 1, 2006)

Gr 7 Up-Ruiz Zafon first published this novel in 1993. After becoming a bestseller author and

having his work translated into forty languages, this earlier novel and *El palacio de la medianoche* (reviewed in this issue) are being published in the United States. This gothic novel contains the right elements to fascinate young adults: death, mystery, romance, magic, and a thrilling climax. It's World War II and 13-year-old Max's father moves the family from their London home to a small village by the Atlantic Ocean. Little do they know that the house has a mysterious past and was abandoned by the previous owners when their 7-year-old son drowned. Strange things start happening to the family when they first move in, including the freaky death of one of Max's friends, a wardrobe that makes weird sounds, statues that move, and the appearance of an evil magician disguised as a clown. Everything starts unraveling when Max finds an old projector with home movies. As he views the movies, the boy discovers a sinister plot that he will try to prevent. This is definitely a page turner. Recommended for upper-elementary, junior-high, and high-school libraries.-Veronica Covington, Univ. of Texas, Austin  
Copyright 2006 Reed Business Information.

10. Zevin, Gabrielle, and Núria Pérez. *En otro lugar*. Barcelona: Umbriel Juvenil, 2006. Print.

**En otro lugar (#22031To)**

by Zevin, Gabrielle

Booklist starred (August 2005 (Vol. 101, No. 22))

Narration from beyond the grave has been cropping up with some frequency in YA novels this year, including Chris Crutcher's *The Sledding Hill* and Adele Griffin's *Where I Want to Be* (both 2005). But this example, Zevin's second novel and her first for the YA audience, is a work of powerful beauty that merits judgment independent of any larger trend. The setting is an elaborately conceived afterlife called Elsewhere, a distinctly secular island realm of surprising physical solidity (no cottony clouds or pearly gates here), where the dead exist much as they once did--except that no one dies or is born, and aging occurs in reverse, culminating when the departed are returned to Earth as infants to start the life cycle again. Having sailed into Elsewhere's port aboard a cruise ship populated by mostly elderly passengers, 15-year-old head-trauma victim Liz Hall does not go gently into Elsewhere's endless summer. She is despairing, intractable, sullen, and understandably furious: "You mean I'll never go to college or get married or get big boobs or live on my own or get my driver's license or fall in love?" She rejects her new existence, spending endless hours keeping tabs on surviving family and friends through magical coin-operated telescopes, and refusing to take the suggestions offered by a well-meaning Office of Acclimation. Eventually, though, she begins to listen. She takes a job counseling deceased pets, forges an unexpected romance with a young man struggling with heartbreaks, and finds simple joy in the awareness that "a life is a good story . . . even a crazy, backward life like hers." Periodic visits with an increasingly youthful Liz, concluding with her journey down the "River" to be reborn, bring the novel to a graceful, seamless close. Although the book may prove too philosophical for some, Zevin offers readers more than a gimmick-driven novel of ideas: the world of Elsewhere is too tangible for that. "A human's life is a beautiful mess," reflects Liz, and the observation is reinforced with strikingly conceived examples: a newly dead thirty-something falls in love with Liz's grandmother, who is biologically similar in age but experientially generations older; fresh arrivals reunite with spouses long since departed, creating incongruous May-December marriages and awkward love triangles (as Liz experiences when her boyfriend's wife suddenly appears). At one poignant moment, four-year-old Liz loses the ability to read. The passage she attempts to decipher, which comes from Natalie Babbitt's *Tuck Everlasting*, is another meditation on the march of time and change. Although Zevin's conception of the afterlife will inevitably ruffle many theological feathers, the comfort it offers readers grieving for



lost loved ones, as well as the simple, thrilling satisfaction derived from its bold engagement with basic, provocative questions of human existence, will far outweigh any offense its metaphysical perspective might give. Far more than just a vehicle for a cosmology, this inventive novel slices right to the bone of human yearning, offering up an indelible vision of life and death as equally rich sides of the same coin.

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